

March 21, 2011

To: Committee on Planning and Development

From: Gayle Weinstein, First Selectman, Weston
Natalie Ketcham, First Selectman, Redding

Re: HB 6411, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY WAYS IN WHICH TO
PROVIDE MUNICIPAL MANDATE RELIEF

Thank you for allowing us to submit testimony regarding HB 6411, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY WAYS IN WHICH TO PROVIDE MUNICIPAL MANDATE RELIEF. We appreciate the Committee's responsiveness to our concern regarding unfunded mandates; however we believe that another task force, with the proposed charge, will only delay relief to municipalities. Last year the Blue Ribbon Commission on Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies (M.O.R.E.) proposed many suggestions; unfortunately their recommendations were not followed.

Any Bill that requires a municipality to do something or change the way we do something, without the State providing funds to cover the associated costs, is an "unfunded mandate." The impact may be as small as devoting staff time to file the required report or as large as several hundred thousand dollars, the cost of the multitude of education mandates.

While well-intentioned, many of these Bills may, theoretically, sound like a good idea, but we need to investigate a little further, as to the practical side of implementing, along with the associated costs.

At the beginning of every legislative session, CCM and COST provide reports to municipalities and to all members of the General Assembly that detail all unfunded mandates and their potential impact to municipalities. We do not need a task force to "re-invent the wheel."

We respectfully ask the Committee to amend SB 6411 to require all co-sponsors of Bills that affect municipalities to provide an impact study. This study should include all costs, including staff time, as well as the practical side of implementing the proposed legislation. Additionally, it should include a provision to allow the reconsideration of current legislation by applying the same metrics.

We believe this change will allow all members of the General Assembly to make an informed decision regarding the cost of legislation to municipalities versus the benefits to our residents.